

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION PILOT:** Reflections on the Construction of a Digital Family Oral History and Its Impact on Adult Learning

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The Digital Family Oral History Pilot (DFOHP) data were collected and catalogued on a private website blog for family members to learn about their grandfather (ALP) who died without telling his own story. This study examined the outcomes and perceptions of the family members who were engaged with the pilot. A self-selected sample of 17 family members were interviewed and their reflections recorded. The reflections held their perceptions of adult learning as they responded to three research questions. “How did the family change when constructing an oral history about themselves?” “How did the family members perceive themselves as part of a family community through this oral history process?” and “What is the impact on the family relationships?” The reflections were coded and clustered in color assigned categories that revealed the themes.

Findings indicated the family changed in positive ways through knowledge they gained, the new connection via the Internet, through affirmation of each other and the desire that future

generations will use this resource. The family perceived themselves in varied positions within their social structure. The daughter placed herself in the epicenter due to her knowledge of her father (ALP). Family members, who perceived themselves as outliers, identified new knowledge of ALP that will help them move closer to the center in the future. The final research question on the impact on family relations elicited responses such as mended brother/sister stresses and enthusiasm that many of the family participated in the storytelling. The few negative reflections expressed sadness that ALP was not here to see what the family constructed and concern that individual stories did not encroach on the available space. The combined stories and reflections shared enough oral history that ALP was revealed as a person worth knowing to those who did not know his oral history previously.

Finally, with responses such as “learned”, “learning” and “I now know” received from the sample, an environment of non-threatening informal education established new ways of knowing through an activity as simple as sharing story. Implicit informal education through storytelling was the catalyst for bonding between the branches of this family’s tree.